The Younger Set

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS,

Author of "The Fighting Chance," Etc.

For awhile Nina swung there in silence, her pretty eyes fixed on her brother. He had nearly finished cutting the leaves of the magazine before she spoke, mentioning the fact of Rosamund Fane's arrival at the Minsters' house, Brookminster.

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The slightest frown gathered and passed from her brother's sun bronzed forehead, but he made no comment.

"Mr. Neergard is a guest, too," she observed.

"What!" exclaimed Selwyn in disgust.

"Yes; he came ashore with the Fanes."

Selwyn flushed a little, but went on cutting the pages of the magazine. When he had finished he flattened the pages between both covers and said, without raising his eyes:

"I'm sorry that crowd is to be in evidence."

"They always are and always will be," smiled his sister.

He looked up at her. "Do you mean that anybody else is a guest at Brookminster?"

"Yes, Phil."

"Alixe?"

"Yes."

He looked down at the book on his knees and began to furrow the pages absently.

"Phil," she said, "have you heard anything this summer—lately—about the Ruthvens?"

"No."

"Nothing at all?"

"Not a word."

"You knew they were at Newport as usual?"

"I took it for granted."

"And you have heard no rumors—no gossip concerning them—nothing about a yacht?"

"Where was I to hear it? What gossip? What yacht?"

His sister said very seriously, "Alixe has been very careless."

"Everybody is. What of it?"

"It is understood that she and Jack Ruthven have separated."

He looked up quickly. "Who told you that?"

"A woman wrote me from Newport. And Alixe is here and Jack Ruthven is in New York. Several people have—I have heard about it from several sources. I'm afraid it's true, Phil."

They looked into each other's troubled eyes, and he said: "If she has done this, it is the worse of two evils she has chosen. To live with him was bad enough, but this is the limit."

"I know it. She cannot afford to do such a thing again. Phil, what is the matter with her? She simply cannot be sane and do such a thing—can she?"

"I don't know," he said.

"Well, I do. She is not sane. She has made herself horridly conspicuous among conspicuous people. She has been indiscreet to the outer edge of effrontery. Even that set won't stand it always—especially as their men folk are quite crazy about her, and she leads a train of them about wherever she goes—the little fool!

"And now, if it's true that there's going to be a separation, what on earth will become of her? I ask you, Phil, for I don't know. But men know what becomes eventually of women who slap the world across the face with over-ringed fingers.

"If—if there's any talk about it—if there's newspaper talk—if there's a divorce, who will ask her to their houses? Who will condone this thing? Who will tolerate it or her? Men, and men only, the odious sort that fawn on her now and follow her about half sneeringly. They'll tolerate it, but their wives won't, and the kind of women who will receive and tolerate her are not included in my personal experience. What a fool she has been! Good heavens, what a fool!"

A trifle paler than usual, he said: "There is no real harm in her. I know there is not."

"You are very generous, Phil."

"No, I am trying to be truthful. And I say there is no harm in her. I have made up my mind on that score." He leaned nearer his sister and laid one hand on hers where it lay across the hammock's edge.

"Nina, no woman could have done what she has done and continue to do what she does and be mentally sound. This, at last, is my conclusion."

"It has long been my conclusion," she said under her breath.

He stared at the floor out of gray eyes grown dull and hopeless.

"Phil," whispered his sister, "suppose—suppose—what happened to her father"—

"I know."

She said again: "It was slow at first, a brilliant eccentricity that gradually became something less pleasant. Oh, Phil, Phil!"

"It was softening of the brain," he said, "was it not?"

"Yes: he entertained a delusion of conspiracy against him, also a complacent conviction of the mental instability of others. Yet at intervals he remained clever and witty and charming."

"And then?"

"Phil—he became violent at times."

"Yes. And the end?" he asked quietly.

"A little child again, quite happy and content, playing with toys, very gentle, very pitiable." The hot tears filled her eyes. "Oh, Phil!" she sobbed and hid her face on his shoulder.

Over the soft, faintly fragrant hair he stared stupidly, lips apart, chin loose.

A little later Nina sat up in the hammock, daintily effacing the traces of tears. Selwyn was saying: "If this is so, that Ruthven man has got to stand by her. Where could she go if such trouble is to come upon her? To whom can she turn if not to him? He is responsible for her—doubly so if her condition is to be—that! By every law of manhood he is bound to stand by her now. By every law of decency and humanity he cannot desert her now. If she does these—these indiscreet things, and if he knows she is not altogether mentally responsible, he cannot fail to stand by her! How can he, in God's name?"

"Phil," she said, "you speak like a man, but she has no man to stand loyally by her 'n the direst need a human soul may know. He is only a thing—no man at all—only a loathsome accident of animated decadence."

He looked up quickly, amazed at her sudden bitterness, and she looked back at him almost fiercely.

"I may as well tell you what I've heard," she said. "I was not going to at first, but it will be all around town sooner or later. Rosamund told me. She learned—as she manages to learn everything a little before anybody else hears of it—that Jack Ruthven found out that Alixe was behaving very carelessly with some man—some silly, callow and probably harmless youth. But there was a disgraceful scene on Mr. Neergard's yacht, the Niobrara. I don't know who the people were, but Ruthven acted abominably. The Niobrara anchored in Widgeon bay yesterday, and Alixe is aboard, and her husband is in New York, and Rosamund says he means to divorce her in one way or another. Ugh, the horrible little man, with his rings and bangles!"

She shuddered. "Why, the mere bringing of such a suit means her social ruin, no matter what verdict is brought in. Her only salvation has been in remaining inconspicuous, and a sane girl would have realized it. But"—and she made a gesture of despair—"you see what she has done. And, Phil, you know what she has done to you, what a mad risk she took in going to your rooms that night."

"Who said she had ever been in my rooms?" he demanded, flushing darkly in his surprise.

"Did you suppose I didn't know it?" she asked quietly. "Oh, but I did, and it kept me awake nights worrying. Yet I knew it must have been all right—knowing you as I do. But do you suppose other people would hold you as innocent as I do? Even Eileen—the sweetest, whitest, most loyal little soul in the world—was troubled when Rosamund hinted at some scandal touching you and Alixe. She told me, but she did not tell me what Rosamund had said—the mischief maker!"

His face had become quite colorless. He raised an unsteady hand to his mouth, touching his mustache, and his gray eyes narrowed menacingly.

"Rosamund—spoke of scandal to—Eileen?" he repeated. "Is that possible?"

"How long do you suppose a girl can live and not hear scandal of some sort?" said Nina. "It's bound to rain some time or other, but I prepared my little duck's back to shed some things."

"You say," insisted Selwyn, "that Rosamund spoke of me—in that way—to Eileen?"

"Yes. It only made the child angry, Phil, so don't worry."

"No; I won't worry. No, I—I won't. You are quite right, Nina. But the pity of it, that tight, hard shelled woman of the world to do such a thing to a young girl."

"Rosamund is Rosamund," said Nina, with a shrug. "The antidote to her species is obvious."

"Right, thank God!" said Selwyn between his teeth. "Mens sana in corpore sano! Bless her little heart! I'm glad you told me this, Nina."

He rose and laughed a little, a curious sort of laugh, and Nina watched him, perplexed.

"Where are you going, Phil?" she asked.

"I don't know. I—where is Eileen?"

"She's lying down—a headache, probably too much sun and salt water. Shall I send for her?"

"No; I'll go up and inquire how she is. Susanne is there, isn't she?"

And he entered the house and ascended the stairs.

The little Alsatian maid was seated in a corner of the upper hall, sewing, and she informed Selwyn that mademoiselle had "bad in ze head."

But at the sound of conversation in the corridor Eileen's gay voice came to them from her room asking who it was, and she evidently knew, for there was a hint of laughter in her tone.

"It is I. Are you better?" said Selwyn.

"Yes. D-did you wish to see me?"

"Yes."

The pretty greeting she always reserved for him, even if their separation had been for a few minutes only, she now offered, hand extended, a cool,

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fragrant hand which lay for a second in his, closed, and withdrew, leaving her eyes very friendly.

"Come out on the west veranda," she said. "I know what you wish to say to me. Besides, I have something to confide to you too. And I'm very impatient to do it."

He followed her to the veranda. She seated herself in the broad swing and moved so that her invitation to him was unmistakable. Then when he had taken the place beside her she turned toward him very frankly, and he looked up to encounter her beautiful direct gaze.

"What is disturbing our friendship?" she asked. "Do you know? I don't. I went to my room after luncheon and lay down on my bed and quietly deliberated. And do you know what conclusion I have reached?"

"What?" he asked.

"That there is nothing at all to disturb our friendship and that what I said to you on the beach was foolish. I don't know why I said it. I'm not the sort of girl who says such stupid things, though I was apparently for that one moment. And what I said about Gladys was childish. I am not jealous of her, Captain Selwyn. Don't think me silly or perverse or sentimental, will you?"

"I wish to ask you something."

"With pleasure," she said. "Go ahead." And she settled back, fearlessly expectant.

"Very well, then," he said, striving to speak coolly. "It is this: Will you marry me, Eileen?"

She turned perfectly white and stared at him, stunned. And he repeated his question, speaking slowly but unsteadily.

"N-no," she said, "I cannot. Why—why, you know that, don't you?"

"Will you tell me why, Eileen?"

"I—I don't know why. I think—I suppose that it is because I do not love you—that way."

"Yes," he said, "that, of course, is the reason. I wonder—do you suppose that—in time—perhaps—you might care for me—that way?"

"I don't know." She glanced up at him fearfully, fascinated, yet repelled. "I don't know," she repeated pitifully. "Is it—can't you help thinking of me in that way? Can't you be as you were?"

"No, I can no longer help it. I don't want to help it, Eileen."

"But—I wish you to," she said in a low voice. "It is that which is coming between us. Oh, don't you see it is? Don't you feel it—feel what it is doing to us? Don't you understand how it is driving me back into myself? Whom am I to go to if not to you? What am I to do if your affection turns into this—this different attitude toward me? I—I loved you so dearly—so fearlessly."

Tears blinded her. She bent her head, and they fell on the soft, delicate stuff of her gown, flashing downward in the sunlight.

"Dear," he said gently, "nothing is altered between us. I love you in that way too."

"D-do you really?" she stammered, shrinking away from him.

"Truly. Nothing is altered. Nothing of the bond between us is weakened. On the contrary, it is strengthened. You cannot understand that now. But what you are to believe and always understand is that our friendship must endure."

"I want to ask you something," she said, "merely to prove that you are a little bit illogical. May I?"

He nodded, smiling.

"Could you and I care for each other more than we now do if we were married?"

"I think so," he said.

"Why?" she demanded, astonished. Evidently she had expected another answer.

He made no reply, and she lay back among the cushions considering what he had said, the flush of surprise still lingering in her cheeks.

"How can I marry you," she asked, "when I would—would not care to endure a—a caress from any man, even from you? It—such things—would spoil it all. I don't love you that way. Oh, don't look at me that way! Have I hurt you, dear Captain Selwyn? I did not mean to. Oh, what has become of our happiness? What has become of it?" And she turned, full length in the swing, and hid her face in the silken pillows.

He looked down at her, slowly realizing that it was a child he still was dealing with—a child with a child's innocence, repelled by the graver phase of love, unresponsive to the deeper emotions, bewildered by the glimpse of the mature role his attitude had compelled her to accept. That she already had reached that milestone and for a moment had turned involuntarily to look back and find her childhood already behind her frightened her.

Thinking perhaps of his own years and of what lay behind him, he sighed and looked out over the waste of moorland where the Atlantic was battering the sands of Surf point. Then his patient gaze shifted to the east, and he saw the surface of Sky pond, blue as the eyes of the girl who lay crouching in the cushioned corner of the swinging seat, small hands clinched over the handkerchief, a limp bit of stuff damp with her tears.

"There is one thing," he said, "that we mustn't do—cry about it, must we, Eileen?"

"No-o."

He was silent, and presently she said, "I—the reason of it—my crying—is b-b-because I don't wish you to be unhappy."

"But, dear, dear little girl, I am not."

"Really?"

"No, indeed. Why should I be? You do love me, don't you?"

"You know I do."

"But not in that way."

"N-no; not in that way. I w-wish I did."

A thrill passed through him. After a moment he relaxed and leaned forward, his chin resting on his clinched hands. "Then let us go back to the old footing, Eileen."

"Can we?"

"Yes, we can, and we will—back to the old footing when nothing of deeper sentiment disturbed us. You know how it is. A man who is locked up in paradise is never satisfied until he can climb the wall and look over. Now I have climbed and looked, and now I climb back into the garden of your dear friendship, very glad to be there again with you—very, very thankful, dear. Will you welcome me back?"

She lay quite still a minute, then sat up straight, stretching out both hands to him, her beautiful, fearless eyes brilliant as rain washed stars.

"Don't go away," she said. "Don't ever go away from our garden again."

"No, Eileen."

"Is it a promise—Philip?"

Her voice fell exquisitely low.

"Yes, a promise. Do you take me back, Eileen?"

"Yes, I take you. Take me back, too, Philip." Her hands tightened in his; she looked up at him, faltered, waited, then in a fainter voice: "And—and be of g-good courage. I—I am not very old yet."

An hour later, when Nina discovered them there together, Eileen, curled up among the cushions in the swinging seat, was reading aloud "Evidences of Asiatic Influence on the Symbolism of Ancient Yucatan," and Selwyn, astride a chair, chin on his folded arms, was listening with evident rapture.

Chapter 21

HITHERWOOD HOUSE, opened from end to end to the soft sea wind, was crowded with the gayest, noisiest throng that had gathered there in a twelvemonth. The Orchils and the Lawns were there, the Minsters, the Craigs from Wyossett, the Grays of Shadow Lake, the Draymores, Fanes, Mottlys, Cardwells—in fact, it seemed as though all Long Island had been drained from Cedarhurst to Islip and from Oyster Bay to Wyossett to pour a stream of garrulous and animated youth and beauty into the halls and over the verandas and terraces and lawns of Hitherwood House.

It was to be a lantern frolic and a lantern dance and supper, all most formally and impressively informal. And it began with a candle race for a big silver gilt cup and a motor boat race won by Boots and Gerald. Out in the bay lay Neergard's yacht, outlined in electricity from stem to stern, every

"It is strange," she said.

spar and funnel and contour of hull and superstructure twinkling in jeweled brilliancy.

On a great improvised open pavilion set up in the Hither woods, garlanded and hung thick with multi-colored paper lanterns, dancing had already begun, but Selwyn and Eileen lingered on the lawn for awhile, fascinated by the beauty of the fireworks pouring skyward from the Niobrara.

"They seem to be very gay aboard her," murmured the girl. "Once you said that you did not like Mr. Neergard. Do you remember saying it?"

He replied simply, "I don't like him, and I remember saying so."

"It is strange," she said, "that Gerald does."

Selwyn looked at the illuminated yacht. "I wonder whether any of Neergard's crowd is expected ashore here. Do you happen to know?"

She did not know. A moment later, to his annoyance, Edgerton Lawn came up and asked her to dance, and she went, with a smile and a whispered "Wait for me, if you don't mind; I'll come back to you."

At intervals he caught glimpses of Eileen through the gay crush around him. He danced with Nina and suggested to her it was time to leave, but that young matron had tasted just enough to want more, and Eileen, too, was evidently having a most delightful time. So he settled into the harness of pleasure and was good to the pink and white ones, and they told each other what a "dear" he was and adored him more inconveniently than ever.

(To be continued.)

SAYS LETTERS ARE FORGERIES

Mrs. Hains Makes a Short Statement.

DEFENDS HER GOOD NAME

Intimates That Husband and His Brother Are Resorting to Every Means to Blacken Her Character In Order to Create Sympathy With Jury That Is to Try Them For Murder of William Annis — Lawyers Also Talk.

Boston, Nov. 2.—The publication in New York of extracts from letters purporting to have been written by Mrs. Claudia Hains to her husband, Captain Peter C. Hains, Jr., who is awaiting trial for killing William E. Annis, has elicited a declaration from Mrs. Hains that Captain Hains and his brother, T. Jenkins Hains, feel compelled to resort to every means in their power to blacken her character "in their attempt to save their own lives." Mrs. Hains in her statement asserts that the obvious reason for the attacks on her character is that they were the only way in which the Hains brothers could justify themselves before the public and "manufacture sympathy in the community from which the jury before whom they are to be tried is to be drawn."

Mrs. Hains alludes to the letters as having been forged and garbled, and declares that the charges against her suggested by the letters are false. She affirms that she has endeavored to keep silent under provocation because her replies "must necessarily take away the only chance my husband has for his life," but that many of her friends are urging her to become a witness at the murder trial, and that whether or not she does so will depend upon her ability to withstand "this torrent of abuse."

Hains Request Postponement.

New York, Nov. 2.—Affidavits were presented by John F. McIntyre, counsel for Captain Peter C. Hains and his brother, T. Jenkins Hains, under indictment charged with the killing of William E. Annis, to sustain a motion for the postponement of the impending trial. The documents contained declarations of expert alienists, stating that Captain Hains was not in fit mental condition to take part in a trial. Judge Aspinall granted a postponement of one week, saying that he would give the affidavits consideration. District Attorney Darrin was granted permission to look over the affidavits.

Hains Attorney Talks.

New York, Nov. 2.—Joseph A. Shay of counsel for Peter C. Haines, Jr., said that if Mrs. Claudia L. Hains would come to New York and make an affidavit that the letters and diary which have been published are false, Hains' counsel will pay her $1,000, and then take her case to the courts for determination of the truth of her affidavit. Mr. Shay declared he was anxious to have Mrs. Hains go on the witness stand in the murder trial in order to show the influences that have been at work in Captain Hains' mind.

British Ship Founders.

San Francisco, Nov. 2.—The British ship California which arrived 199 days from Rotterdam, brought word of the loss of the British ship Palgrave, near Coquimbo, Chile. The Palgrave was abandoned by her officers and crew after she had sprung a leak in a heavy storm on Oct. 16. The men reached Coquimbo and the vessel sunk. At the same port there was a rumor that the German ship Henrietta had been lost, but this was not verified.

Mrs. Erb Released.

Media, Pa., Nov. 2.—Counsel for Mrs. J. Clayton Erb, who is charged with being an accessory to the murder of her husband, Captain J. Clayton Erb, entered $500 bail fixed by Judge Bromall, following habeas corpus proceedings, and she was released from custody. It is understood that a trust company gave security for Mrs. Erb. She was driven from the jail in an automobile and her destination was not made public.

Pipe Line Break Fatal.

St. Joseph, Mo., Nov. 3.—One death by asphyxiation, the dismissal of all schools heated with natural gas and cold meals as the result of no fuel was the result of the breaking near Leavenworth, Kan., of a natural gas main with which St. Joseph is supplied most of its light and heat.

Killed by Airship Propeller.

Girard, Kan., Nov. 3.—H. W. Strubble, an employe of the Call airship, was instantly killed while the propellers on the ship were being tried. One of the rear propellers struck the victim in the head.

Britt Defeats Summers.

London, Nov. 3.—Jimmy Britt, the California fighter, defeated Johnny Summers of England in the tenth round at Wonderland. The conditions of the fight called for 10 rounds at 133 pounds.